

S-509  
C. W. Howeth & Brother  
Crisfield  
Private

c. 1915

The C. W. Howeth & Brother packinghouse is part of a line of two-story brick structures that define the Crisfield waterfront along Dock Street. The partly stuccoed common bond brick structure was initially erected as part of the adjacent Ralph Riggin & Company facility (See S-505) and then later subdivided as a separate packinghouse. The original common bond brick wall remains exposed under the shed roofed addition that shelters the first floor openings. The C. W. Howeth & Brother building is part of the historic row of packinghouses that have defined the Crisfield waterfront since the early twentieth century.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. S-509

### 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic C. W. Howeth & Bro.

other

### 2. Location

street and number 11 Dock Street not for publication

city, town Crisfield vicinity

county Somerset

### 3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Metompinkin Bay Oyster Company, Inc.

street and number P. O. Box 671 telephone

city, town Crisfield state Maryland zip code 21817

### 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Somerset County Clerk of Court liber ITP 403 folio 899

city, town Princess Anne tax map 102 tax parcel 17 tax ID number 7-126751

### 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District  
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District  
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER  
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 6. Classification

#### Category

☐ district  
☒ building(s)  
☐ structure  
☐ site  
☐ object

#### Ownership

☐ public  
☒ private  
☐ both

#### Current Function

☐ agriculture  
☐ commerce/trade  
☐ defense  
☐ domestic  
☐ education  
☐ funerary  
☐ government  
☐ health care  
☒ industry  
☐ landscape  
☐ recreation/culture  
☐ religion  
☐ social  
☐ transportation  
☐ work in progress  
☐ unknown  
☐ vacant/not in use  
☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Resource Count

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	Total

Number of Contributing Resources  
previously listed in the Inventory

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## 7. Description

Inventory No. S-509

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### Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

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Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The C. W. Howeth & Brother packinghouse stands at 11 Dock Street in the City of Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland. The two-story, stuccoed brick packinghouse next to the Metompink Bay Oyster Company and is used by the Metompink firm under the historic name.

Built around 1915, the two-story, three-bay, partly stuccoed brick packinghouse has a shed roofed porch that stretches across the first floor. The shed roofed enclosure, which houses the retort and boiler, shelters the exposed seven-course common bond brick wall, which is pierced by a double-door opening. The second floor of the packinghouse is covered with stucco, and the wall surface is pierced by three two-over-two sash window openings. The stuccoed surface bulges at the top where it covers a decorative brick cornice.

The packinghouse abuts the Metompink building on the southeast and the old Ralph Riggin & Brother building is located to the northwest.

Stretching to the back of the two-story section of the packinghouse is a long shed roofed section that is covered by a metal roof. The northeast (rear) wall of the shed roofed section is pierced by three door openings with a modern concrete block cooler in between two of door openings. The cooler has a compressor on the roof.

The interior of the C. W. Howeth & Brother packinghouse was not seen.

## 8. Significance

Inventory No. S-509

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

Specific dates

Architect/Builder

Construction dates

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

The C. W. Howeth & Brother packinghouse is part of a line of two-story brick structures that define the Crisfield waterfront along Dock Street. The partly stuccoed common bond brick structure was initially erected as part of the adjacent Ralph Riggins & Company facility (See S-505) and then later subdivided as a separate packinghouse. The original common bond brick wall remains exposed under the shed roofed addition that shelters the first floor openings. The C. W. Howeth & Brother building is part of the historic row of packinghouses that have defined the Crisfield waterfront since the early twentieth century.

### HISTORY AND SUPPORT

Charles W. Howeth & Brother was founded in the 1920s by Charles (1888-1975) and Robert (1893-1959) Howeth. They packed seafood under the H. & B. Brand.<sup>1</sup> Like other seafood companies in Crisfield, Charles W. Howeth & Bro. was involved in the spring of 1938 crab pickers strike that lasted seven weeks. Although it is uncertain where the company operated initially, by April 1945 the firm had acquired part of the Ralph Riggins & Brother facility along Dock Street facing the Annessex River.<sup>2</sup>

The Howeth brothers negotiated an employment agreement with the United Oysterman's Union no. 19600 (CIO) in April 1942.<sup>3</sup> A year later, in 1943, the company's employees belonged to a union, when employee, William Kane, was selected as shop steward of Local 453.<sup>4</sup> In September 1944, the company with 26 employees (12 men and 14 women) became involved in a wage dispute with Seafood Workers Union Local 453. The union requested a raise of 10 cents per cup for shucking oysters. This would increase earnings to 60 cents an hour when dealers in Baltimore were paying 50 cents an hour. Negotiations deadlocked over the renewal of the contract on wages and the issue of a closed shop. A majority of the Crisfield packers agreed to a wage increase

<sup>1</sup> Jim & Vivian Karsnitz, *Oyster Cans*, Schiffer Publishing Co., 1993, Appendix: Brands List; Crabmeat can in the collection of Kevin Davidson, Cambridge, Maryland.

<sup>2</sup> Somerset County Land Record, BLB 131/458, April 19, 1945

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Department of Labor, United States Conciliation Service, March–December 1942, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>4</sup> *The Butcher Workman*, December 1943, p. 5.

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**Continuation Sheet**

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for the shuckers and packing-room help and the agreement was eventually accepted by all parties.<sup>5</sup>

A strike was threatened in December 1944 with 27 oyster packing companies including Charles W. Howeth in Crisfield. The dispute was over the efforts of the employers to increase the size of the measuring cup used, in compliance with a directive of the Department of Tidewater Fisheries of the State of Maryland. The original agreement provided for the use of an 8 pint measuring cup. Early in December 1944 all of the employers were arrested and convicted of violations of Article 72, Section 90 of the Maryland Code, which allegedly required the use of a 9 pint measuring cup. All the cases were appealed. The employers were paying 60 cents for an 8 pint cup and were willing to pay 67 ½ cents for a 9 pint cup. The union would not agree to the use of a 9 pint cup, contending that Maryland law was optional and not mandatory.<sup>6</sup>

The Seafood Union won a union vote at C. W. Howeth & Brother in 1948 with 48 employees voting for the union and 2 against.<sup>7</sup> The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service files for March 1948 noted that C. W. Howeth & Bro. had a contract with AFL Meat Cutters & Butcher Workmen Local 453 for 85 cents per gallon picking crabmeat. "Pirates" in the industry had caused prices to go to \$1.00 per gallon. The union was considering a company offer of 90 cents per gallon. A note for May 1948 indicated that because of the low price in crab meat markets, the packers at Crisfield, Maryland were not handling crabmeat.<sup>8</sup>

Tensions ran high again in 1949 when employers, including C. W. Howeth & Brother, proposed reducing the wage rates for oyster shuckers in Crisfield. The controversy went to an arbitration board and the decision was to continue the current rate of 85 cents per gallon.<sup>9</sup>

Letterhead dated April 21, 1954 listed Charles W. Howeth & Bro. as wholesale shippers of hard, soft and shedder crabs, terrapin, clams, crabmeat, etc., selected shucked and shell oysters.<sup>10</sup> Upon the death of Robert Howeth in 1959, ownership passed to Charles who sold it in 1960 to W. Cranston Tyler and William Thomas Walston.<sup>11</sup> Tyler and his son-in-law Allen Tyler continued to operate the seafood business under the name of Charles W. Howeth & Bro.<sup>12</sup>

The Directory of Maryland Manufacturers 1965-1966 listed William C. Tyler, Sr. as contact for sales and purchasing with 43 employees (21 men and 22 women) processing oysters, crabmeat and soft crabs. In 1977

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<sup>5</sup> U. S. Department of Labor, United States Conciliation Service,

<sup>6</sup> U. S. Department of Labor, United States Conciliation Service, Office of Regional Supervisor, Baltimore, Maryland, December 20, 1944, File No. 442-3312, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>7</sup> *The Butcher Workman*, May 1948, p. 6

<sup>8</sup> Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service Dispute Case Files, March 1948, File No. 482-603, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>9</sup> "Oyster Workers Win Arbitration: Maryland Shuckers Coming Into Amalgamated," *The Butcher Workman*, November 1949, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> In the collection of Kevin Davidson, Cambridge, Maryland.

<sup>11</sup> Somerset County Land Record, ITP 198/576, May 9, 1960.

<sup>12</sup> Woodrow T. Wilson, *Crisfield, Maryland 1876-1976*, Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1977, p. 460.

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William C. Tyler and William C. Tyler Jr. were partners with 40 employees, ten men and thirty women, processing crabmeat, oysters, and soft crabs.<sup>13</sup> In 1983 the company employed 35 people packing crabmeat, oysters, and soft crabs.<sup>14</sup> The property was sold to Metompkin Bay Oyster Company in 1992.<sup>15</sup> The *2000 Maryland/DC Manufacturers Directory* listed Arthur H. Tawes as general manager of the company with 40 employees processing crabs and oysters.

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<sup>13</sup> Directory of Maryland Manufacturers 1977-1978, Maryland Department of Economic and Community Development, p. 221.

<sup>14</sup> Directory of Maryland Manufacturers 1983-1984, Maryland Department of Economic and Community Development, p. 294.

<sup>15</sup> Somerset County Land Record, ITP 403/889, April 22, 1992.

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C. W. Howeth & Brother Packinghouse  
11 Dock Street  
Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland  
Chain of title

Map 102, Parcel 17 .17 acre

ITP 403/889

Charles W. Howeth & Bros. Inc.

to

4/22/1992

Metompink Bay Oyster Company, Inc.

ITP 337/616

William C. Tyler and Erma Tyler

to

5/2/1983

Charles W. Howeth & Bros.

ITP 336/414

William C. Tyler, Sr.  
Mildred Frances Tyler

to

2/14/1983

William C. Tyler and Erma Tyler

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ITP 198/576

Charles W. Howeth, Cordelia Howeth, Marian Howeth, widow;  
Robert W. Howeth, Jr. and Jetta Howeth

to

5/9/1960

William C. Tyler, Sr. and Mildred Francis Tyler    ½ interest  
William Thomas Walston and Hilda Marie Walston    ½ interest

“Oyster House Lot”

BFL 36/250

Last Will and Testament of Robert Howeth

to

10/29/1958

Marian S. Howeth and Robert W. Howeth, Jr.

BLB 131/458

Ralph Riggin et al. (Alma Riggin, Lloyd Riggin, Elsie Riggin,  
Bank of Crisfield and the Marine Bank of Crisfield)

to

4/19/1945

Robert W. Howeth



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49/71

Abednego R. Crockett et al. (Lillian J. Crockett)

to

4/30/1907

Ralph Riffin and Lloyd Riffin

\$3,000....all that lot or parcel...beginning for the same on the East side of the Little Annemessex at the northwest corner of the property on which stands the mill of W. C. Muir & Co., thence by and with the mill property to Hearn Street

HFL 8/129

N. Walter Dixon, trustee

to

6/14/1890

Abednego R. Crockett  
L. James Riffin  
John T. Sterling

...and a part of the real estate described to said Abednego R. Crockett and L. James Riffin from Thomas Conner, 5/27/1886, HFL 4/240

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Somerset County Land Records, various volumes, Somerset County Courthouse.  
(For a full listing of the resources see footnotes)

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of surveyed property .17 acre  
Acreage of historical setting .40 acre  
Quadrangle name Crisfield, Maryland

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

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The historic metes and bounds of this property have been subdivided from a larger lot. Two historic boundary lines are coincidental with the current boundary of the lot.

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## 11. Form Prepared by

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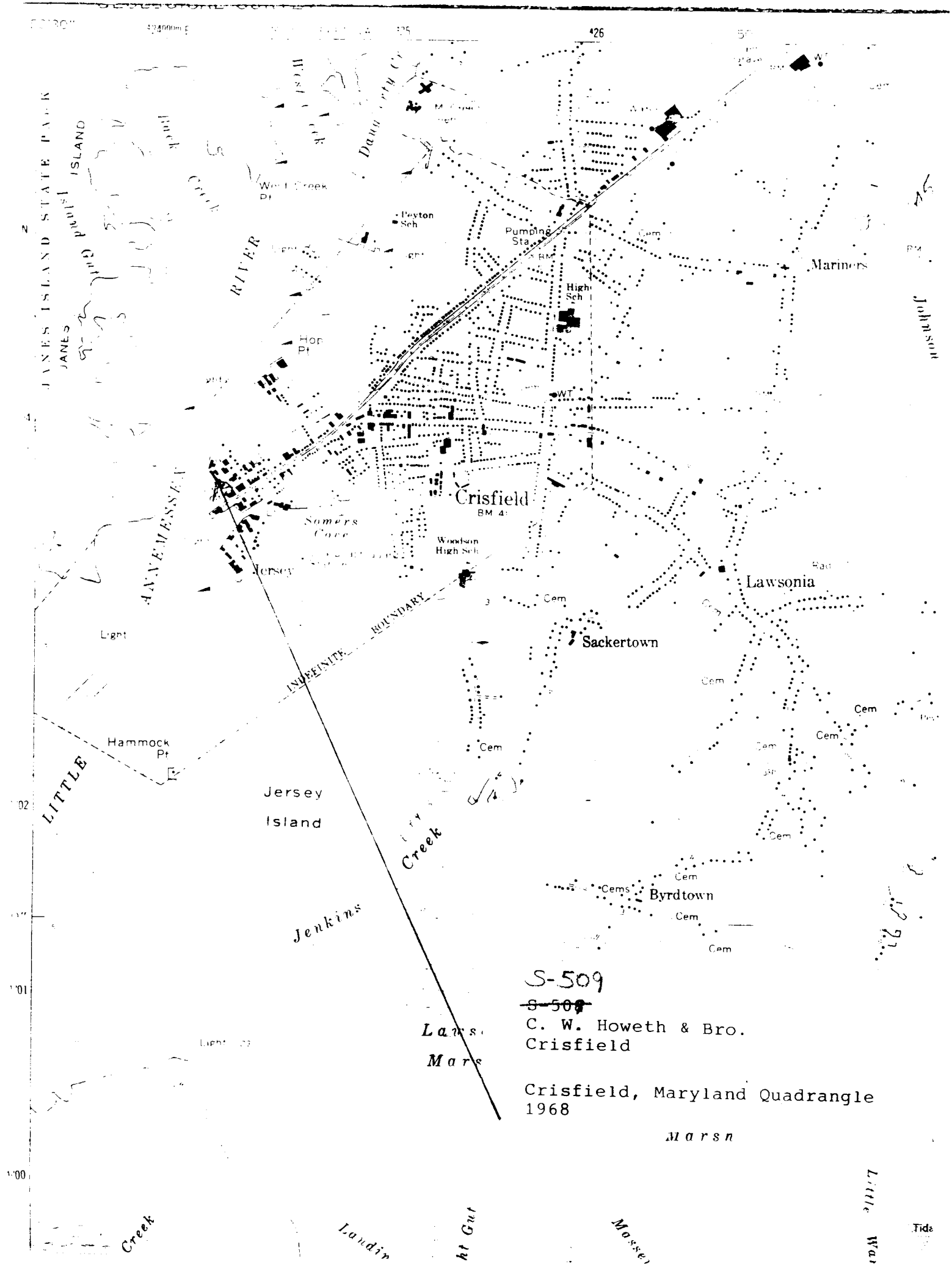
name/title	Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian, Virginia Jenkins, Business Historian, CBMM		
organization	Private Consultants	date	12/10/2001
street & number	P. O. Box 5	telephone	410-651-1094
city or town	Westover	state	Maryland 21871

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The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
DHCD/DHCP  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023  
410-514-7600



S-509

~~S-509~~

C. W. Howeth & Bro.  
Crisfield

Crisfield, Maryland Quadrangle  
1968

Marsn

Little War

Tida

Mosser

ht Gut

Landin

Creek



S-509

C. W. Howell & Bro.

CRISTINA, Somerset Co. MA.

SOUTHWEST ELEVATION

2/2002, Paul Touart, PHOTO.

NEZ. / MID. HISTORICAL TRAIL

1 of 2



S-509

C. W. HORTON P BRO.

CRISMAN, SOMERSET CO MD

NORTHERN ELEVATION

2/2002, PAUL TOWNSEND, PITTSBURGH

NET / MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

2 of 2